

Town of Tiverton



Economic Development Commission

343 Highland Road, Tiverton Rhode Island 02878

MEETING MINUTES

ORGANIZATION: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

DATE AND TIME: FEBRUARY 14, 2008 @ 9:00 AM

LOCATION: TIVERTON COMMUNITY CENTER
346 JUDSON STREET
TIVERTON, RI 02878

Chairman Len Schmidt called the regular meeting of the Tiverton Economic Development Commission to order at 9:15 A.M. Members present were: Len Schmidt and Steve Gilbert. Also in attendance were Town Planner Christopher Spencer and Town Administrator Glenn Steckman.

**ITEM # 1: Presentation by Keith Stokes, Executive Director of the
Newport County Chamber of Commerce**

Mr. Stokes described the role of the Newport County Chamber of Commerce and its most recent interactions with the Town of Tiverton. He described the process by which the 2003 Tiverton Economic Development study came to be, noting that the Chamber partnered with the Town on this project and assisted in obtaining grant funds. Mr. Stokes noted that the Chamber is a "pass through" for grant funds for both economic development and some capital improvement projects. Mr. Stokes noted that the Chamber has access to market information, and would often bring investors into a particular community.

The 2003 Economic study was discussed, with Mr. Stokes noting the Tiverton was in a great location with great access, and would therefore experience considerable pressure to allow development that would service a regional market. One of the main recommendations of the 2003 was to hire a full-time Town Planner. Another recommendation had been to re-think the zoning in the area of Route 24, and possibly prohibit development of large shopping centers that would create traffic and compete with existing local businesses.

Mr. Stokes described his other roles in local economic development, including that of Treasurer of the RI Economic Development Corporation (RIEDC) and Chair of the Newport County Development Council. He noted that the RIEDC had determined that the most desirable and attainable business development would be many diverse, smaller businesses, rather than large

businesses. He stated that Rhode Island could not compete with some other states for these large businesses.

Discussion ensued regarding the Tiverton Industrial Park, with Mr. Stokes noting that the Town would need to come up with a plan for the property, and then the Chamber would respond with its resources. He opined that the highest and best use for the parcel might be light industrial, since there was little demand for "Class A" office space due to the glut in the Boston area market.

Mr. Stokes described various planning and development projects in Newport and Middletown. Transportation planning was discussed, along with the scarcity of funding for State projects. The charrette process was discussed, which involved a meeting of stakeholders and the exchange of ideas regarding preferences for development. Mr. Stokes stressed the importance of an experienced charrette leader.

Mr. Steckman noted that there was \$15,000 still available for execution of the [commercial] Design Standards Project, which had been started but never completed. The Stone Bridge Improvement Taskforce project (Stone Bridge streetscape & abutment improvement) was discussed, with Mr. Steckman noting there was approximately \$370,000 available for this project. He noted that much more money would be needed to complete the improvements to the abutment, which serves as a storm surge protector for the harbor and waterfront development in the area. The different approaches for the Stone Bridge improvement were briefly discussed. It was noted that a grant from Senator Kennedy's office had been obtained, but never executed prior to Mr. Steckman's inquiry. Mr. Stokes noted that the Chamber had engaged a full-time lobbyist, and had much experience in executing federal earmarks.

Various Tiverton development projects were discussed, including the new library, rehabilitated Bulgarmarsh Road recreation area and the proposed Sandy Woods Farm artists' community, all of which would be located at Bliss Corners (Bulgarmarsh, Stafford and Crandall Roads). Mr. Steckman noted that need for cooperation between groups to facilitate creation of successful, cohesive development.

Discussion ensued regarding the Tiverton Industrial Park. Mr. Stokes suggested that creation of a Master Plan for the Park would be an ideal task for the EDC. Previous proposals for the site were discussed. It was noted that the Park is now available, and not under a purchase and sales agreement. Mr. Stokes noted that light equipment manufacturing might be ideal. He suggested that there would not be much demand for any buildings of more than 50,000 square feet, or approximately 3-acre lots. The possibility of some mixed-use was discussed. High water and sewer rates were noted, as well as the high site development costs. Master plan creation was discussed, with Mr. Stokes noting that if a project were defined by the Town (scope, parameters and time frame), the Chamber would assist.

Mr. Stokes stated that he would like to arrange for a Chamber Board of Directors meeting to be held in Tiverton in May or June, allowing members to become more familiar with Tiverton and foster a dialog with local business leaders. Mr. Stokes will correspond with Mr. Spencer regarding this meeting, and would inform the Town Council of the date as early as possible.

GIS (Geographic Information System) data was discussed. It was noted that Tiverton recently received a grant to develop its own system. Mr. Stokes discussed applications used on Aquidneck Island, including mapping wastewater management needs and housing and commercial development concentrations. Mr. Stokes noted that GIS would be a great tool for the Town Council and the public.

The Town's relationship with Fall River was discussed. Mr. Steckman stressed the importance of good communication. Mr. Stokes noted that Fall River was ahead of the curve with respect to economic development, especially specialty equipment manufacturing and assembly. It was noted that the Tiverton Industrial Park was within the Enterprise Zone, which would be advantageous to development once the Town formulates a plan. Utilities' planning was discussed, including water and sewer. Mr. Stokes agreed to speak with Northeast Engineers and the Maguire Group regarding the possibilities, and would contact Mr. Spencer within the next couple of weeks.

**ITEM #2: Request Letter from Town Clerk's Office
RE: Status on Members**

Mr. Spencer stated that he had asked the Town Clerk to resend a letter to a member of the EDC who he had not been able to contact, to find out if they are still interested in participating.

ITEM #3: Follow up: Recruitment of new members

Brief discussion ensued regarding new member recruitment.

**ITEM # 4: Procedures: Posting of Agenda & Minutes
(Town web site and Rhode Island Secretary of State website)**

Mr. Spencer asked Mr. Steckman to check with the Town Clerk's office regarding their ability to post the Commission's agendas and minutes. Mr. Spencer agreed to email Mr. Steckman to get the password to log onto the Secretary of State's website for the required posting of agendas.

ITEM # 5: Secretarial Assistance

The Commission members agreed to set their own agendas. Mr. Spencer stated that he could convert the agendas to a .pdf format. Planning Clerk Kate Michaud will write summary minutes, which will be approved by the EDC prior to release.

ITEM # 6: Status on Four Corners items from previous meeting

Mr. Spencer agreed to put together some action items regarding this item for future discussion.

ITEM # 7: Remarks from Glenn Steckman

Mr. Steckman remarked on the outstanding opportunity for the EDC to become involved with the Industrial Park's development. He encouraged the commission to develop their own

webpage as part of the Town's website. Potential uses for the Industrial Park were briefly discussed again.

ITEM # 8 Action Items for Next Meeting (3.13.08)

Action items were summarized throughout the meeting.

(Italicized words represent corrections made on the approved date.)

Submitted by: Kate Michaud Approval Date: March 13, 2008